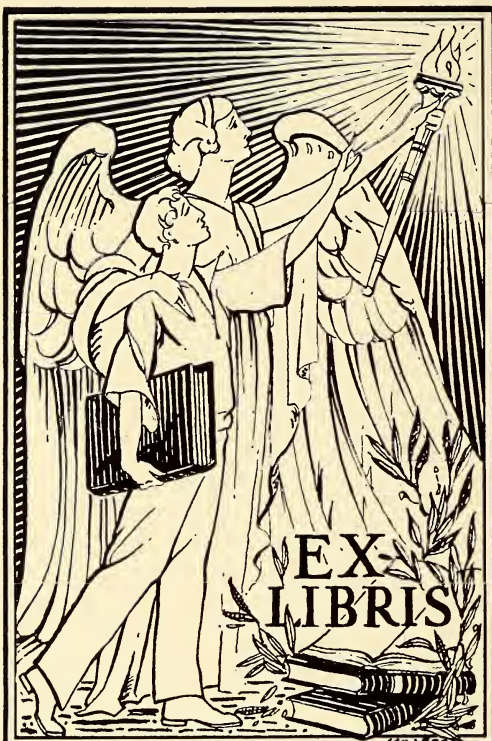


HAPPINESS CAN DWELL IN DARKNESS.

Alvin L. Floyd.



AMERICAN FOUNDATION
FOR THE BLIND INC.

Happiness Can Dwell In Darkness

By Alvin L. Floyd

Editor's note—This valued contribution was secured for the News by Mr. A. H. Abbott, Supervisor of Vocational Rehabilitation of the state of Oklahoma. Mr. Abbott assures us that Mr. Floyd is not only a capable writer but he does all the things mentioned in the article in an expert manner.

Man's mastery of mind is the secret of happiness. To what degree the brain is controlled is the determining factor between: A radiant smile or a contemptuous frown; exhilarating enjoyment or burdensome boredom; loyal friends or treacherous enemies; glorious success or complete failure. Quite a statement, but nevertheless true.

Mastery of mind is the ability to direct thoughts through wholesome channels, which guide actions into upright and noble freedom, by seeking higher and loftier things, instead of allowing them to wander aimlessly down-grade to be lost in disillusioning fog. This may be likened to a man directing his own footsteps through a forest. He may start aimlessly through without paying heed to advice or advance markings. The unknown way is devious and uncertain; soon thick, cruel underbrush and rocks are encountered, and his going is heavily impeded. At last, if he ever reaches his destination, which is doubtful, he is too battered and weary to partake of the pleasures awaiting him. On the other hand, controlled thought may be likened to the traveler's avoidance of such harassing obstacles by choosing paths along the higher levels. Thus, the passage is made enjoyable by the association of fellow men who seek the higher and loftier things of life, and by so doing he finds upon arrival at his destination that he is thoroughly fitted both mentally and physically, to reap the rewards awaiting him. So it is, through life we go, either masters or slaves to our own self.

Physical handicaps make no difference in acquiring a mastery over mind. They do, however, quite often add inconveniences and hardships to lives unused to burdens. But directly in the wake of handicap, if the individual will react immediately to master himself, by first mastering his mind, the burden will lose weight. Eventually the barrier which seemed at first to threaten destruction will no longer obscure the lamp of happiness, which glows with the radiant hope of success.

Many, many people, those possessed with

sight, and those without, have asked me this question. How is it that you, though sightless, find happiness? The answer is simple. I go and get it, like going after a drink when I thirst. I am always up and doing, with a heart for any task, seeking always to achieve, and deriving happiness from accomplishment. There is unmeasurable pleasure in something attempted, something well done. Nothing will come to you, not even a small drink of water.

The first advice I offer to those who, like myself, live in worldly darkness is, "forget your eyes." If this cannot be done, then they have not learned their A/B C's in the science of mind mastery. After all, eyes are not absolutely essential. Many individual cases have proven that truth. They have "seen" through the finely tempered development of their finger tips, ears, and sense of smell, and have forged on to success. But they reached their goal by being happy, working hard, and not by wringing their hands in despondency and crying for pity.

That feeling of utter helplessness which rushes in to take up habitat in one's mind after blindness is a domineering parasite. It waxes fat on self pity, and if allowed to dwell on, unmolested, will thwart all efforts at constructive thinking and reduce its victim into utter wretchedness.

The proper way to rid one's mind of helplessness is by first seeking wholesome recreation. With the accomplishment of that step will come the desire to be useful, and there is no greater pleasure than performing a duty for love's sake. Put forth your very best effort in the performance of pleasure and soon nothing but the best will suffice in your chosen vocation. Between periods of writing I find time for innumerable pastimes. Golf, checkers, fishing, swimming, hill climbing, horseback riding, croquet, and attending baseball games during the long summer afternoons. During the winter days and evenings I derive great pleasure in cards, including contract bridge, dominoes, chess and checkers.

For the benefit of those who fail to understand how a blind person can participate in these games, I will explain. Once while standing nearby, I listened to a conversation of a winning checker player as he won game after game, often not allowing his opponents a king. In the days of my eyesight, I had played several fair players with good success. Now, my greatest momentary desire was to meet him, to mix traps with him, but I was

faced with a problem. How could I play checkers?

The unusual solution of that problem brought a new joy into my life. Two weeks later I stood with a specially constructed board and checkers under my arm and challenged the consistent winner. "Sure," he said, his voice full of confidence, "I'll play you. I know I can beat a blind man. Tell you what, I'll give you four kings." We sat down while a group of onlookers waited and watched for the massacre. Meekly I refused the offer of kings and the game was on. The checker board had half inch holes in the black spaces, and the checkers are made of round and square wooden pegs. This allows me to feel over the men without accidentally moving any of them.

My opponent started playing loosely, but before the game was half completed his moves did not possess their former alacrity and his procedure was more cautious and he constantly drummed the board with his fingers while concentrating, while gasps of surprise dropped from the lips of the on-lookers. Finally, I moved out for him to jump two of my men. It was not a mistake as some thought for the moment, for directly thereafter with my next move I completely forced my trap. A roar went up from my opponent's former victims as I rounded the board for a total of four men to win the game. The win was not the result of superior playing on my part, but was the result of unhampered concentration. What my opponent did not know was that while my fingers flashed over the formations, I was studying a mental picture as he was likewise studying the board. He had failed to consider the accuracy of inner eyes. That is proven by the fact that I am only a fair player and that there are hundreds that can beat me, but none enjoy the game more than I.

For me to play golf may sound unusual, but really it is no more difficult than for men with normal eye-sight. Probably I find more enjoyment than anyone on the course. If there is pleasure in being able to successfully "swat" the illusive ball while looking at it, isn't it reasonable that greater pleasure is derived in being able to "swat" it equally as well without seeing it? My caddy or some good friend places my club behind the ball as though they intend to make the stroke. They hold it rigid while I take time to reach over and feel the ball (just to make sure it is there

I suppose) and take my stance. They tell me the approximate distance by guess and step back. The rest then is up to me, so I drive. Generally my stroke is fair. It may be well to mention the fact that in one phase of the game I excel many who see. Not being able to see water, or the thousand and one other traps, these refuse to be a mental hazard to me, and I get a thrill to drive clear when my opponents fail. I know by the jar of the contact on the ball with the club about the distance the ball will travel, and whether it is topped or sliced.

A small sleigh bell attached to a float on my fishing line tells on the unwary perch, or crappie, that dares to swallow my minnow. Casting is easy as well as trolling from a motor boat or fishing with a tight line.

Swimming is a sport worthy of any blind man's endeavor. I find by the use of the element of time that the jack-knife and swan dive are about as easy to make without seeing the water.

Croquet is an art. Someone holds a string at the wicket, or over the ball I am trying to hit. I stretch the string, get the direction and shoot. It is surprising the skill a person can develop in this manner.

At baseball games it is easy to learn the batting lineup and the possibility of every player. After that the crack of the bat, the hush of the crowd, then the breaking bedlam tells the story especially well if someone is sitting close enough to explain complicated double plays. The manager of our league makes it a practice to give the blind of our city, who desire them, season passes for two. This is very thoughtful of both him and the club owners, and is greatly appreciated by all.

The power of concentration readily aids in the game of chess. In chess all the squares are drilled in the board and the chessmen are glued to their pegs. The black men have a small tack in their top as a means of identification, (kings in checkers).

The Braille slate and stylus make it possible for me to mark my own playing cards in a code especially fitted to the intended game. By driving two nails in the wood below the metal slate, to hold each card straight, it is easy to mark each card with exact uniformity. After they are marked, the dots are hardened for service by a coating of clear shellac. By this method the flexibility of the deck is not

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NATIONAL REHABILITATION NEWS

WILLIS W. GRANT, *Editor*

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Alvin L. Floyd

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damaged, yet the hardness of the perforations make them distinguishable for a longer period of time.

Bridge is somewhat difficult and I never encourage it because of the necessitated slowing up of the game where one is compelled to finger-read thirteen cards. Four, five and six card games are ideal for the blind inasmuch as the game is not delayed and the play is not boring to others who might like fast action.

The secret of having friends enjoy a blind person's companionship is never to be a bore to them by being slow. Be a regular guy by forgetting all handicaps. If a weakness of ability presents itself, diagnose the reason, then conquer it. The reward is the happiness which comes with accomplishment.

The common alibi reverted to by many unfortunates who come to me for advice is their claim to lack of co-operation. This is absolutely true. Yet the fault lies within their own power to correct. Their own reticence, their own failure to measure up to at least a certain degree of efficiency makes the more fortunate prone to seek other companionship.

The only way for the blind to find happiness, pleasant companionship, and co-operation, is to first realize their own shortcomings. This is done by casting off despair and staging an honest and valiant battle to overcome these shortcomings. By so doing, the blind will immediately find themselves surrounded by loyal friends who go out of their way to be of assistance and to supply the needed co-operation.

By careful self-analysis any individual is capable of overpowering and wholly destroying loneliness, disappointment and failure, and

erecting on the self same basic foundation within, an imposing structure of companionship, happiness and success.

Indeed! Is it not so that the best things come with happiness, and that happiness comes with one of God's wonderful gifts, Man's mastery of Mind?

John J. Lee

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our next Convention. Marlow is already at work on the program. Vesta Sturgis and her friends in Grand Rapids are perfecting plans for perfect hospitality and for an excellent convention in Grand Rapids next October.

Modification of Federal Policies—Chairman William Faulkes will present the resolutions and the request of our Association to Commissioner Studebaker sometime this month. We hope for a report in our next issue.

Cooperation With the United States Employment Service—Chairman Faulkes reports progress. Communications have been exchanged and conferences have been held with Hon. Frank Persons, Director of the Employment Service. Bill submitted an excellent plan for cooperation at our Executive Committee meeting in December. We are requesting that he send a copy of the suggested plan to each State Supervisor.

Membership

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class of professional membership calls for dues of \$2.00 per year.

It is important that the Association continue to expand its activities with the increased responsibility following the added appropriations now becoming available. Professional standards must be maintained.

funds for rehabilitation until July, 1936. As a result of later orders from the Relief office, the special grants to the states were to be discontinued December 1, 1935. The committee persuaded Mr. Hopkins to extend the grants until February 1, 1936.

To replace the loss of these grants, the committee undertook to secure a provision in the appropriation under the social security act which would make this fund available temporarily without the state matching provision. This was necessary if the money was to benefit the thirty-eight states where the legislatures did not meet until January, 1937.

Although Speaker Byrnes and Congressman Bankhead in the House cooperated with the committee, it was finally decided by the appropriations committee that this change would constitute new legislation and not be permissible. In the Senate, through the efforts of Senators LaFollette, Hayden and Copeland the appropriation was recommended out and was passed without the matching provision for the present fiscal year.

However, as it emerged from the conference committee and was finally passed, the matching provision was retained.

To secure the benefit of the increased federal allotment for rehabilitation authorized by the social security act, each state must provide an equal amount either by appropriation or from other sources placed under state control.

American Society for the Hard of Hearing

The sixteenth annual conference of the American Society for the Hard of Hearing will be held in Boston May 26-30 at the Hotel Statler. There will be scientific, educational and social service sessions, with prominent speakers from each field. Conferences of the A. S. H. H. are unique in that special wiring equipment is always set up to convey amplified sound to all in the audience with usable hearing. Those who depend entirely on lip reading are aided by means of lip reading "interpreters." The Speech Readers Guild of Boston will act as host.

International Society for Crippled Children

The fifteenth annual convention of the International Society for Crippled Children will be held May 3-6 at the Hotel Statler, St. Louis, Missouri. There are several sessions of special interest to rehabilitation workers.

Liberalization of Federal Funds

By W. F. Faulkes, Chairman

Editor's note—A sentiment has developed of the use of joint federal and state funding expenses of the trainee during this period. Another recommendation is that of joint funds be extended for medical care in the reduction of physical impairment as part of the rehabilitation process. A report of which Wm. F. Faulkes is chairman is working on these suggestions for more than a year. The committee's report to the last national conference embodied recommendations adopted by the committee. Mr. Faulkes was directed to present the report to Dr. Studebaker, commissioner of vocational rehabilitation, and this is a report of his conference.

Just before going to press, inquiry was made if a final decision had been reached. Mr. Faulkes heard nothing further. Mr. Kratz informed that Dr. Wright is planning to request the legislation in the near future.

This is a report of my conference with Dr. Studebaker and Dr. Wright, regarding the liberalization of federal policies as it applies to Vocational Rehabilitation.

Physical Restoration: Twenty-nine states requested the use of matching funds for the purpose of physical restoration. After full consideration was given to this matter, the matter of using federal funds for physical restoration seemed to be involved in the program in regard to which both Dr. Studebaker and Dr. Wright were somewhat reluctant to take action, especially at this time. It was thought best to let this matter rest for the time being. However, Dr. Studebaker indicated his willingness to go as far as the law would permit in this direction, and that the request will receive careful consideration by Dr. Wright and Dr. Studebaker.

Maintenance: Both Dr. Studebaker and Dr. Wright seemed rather inclined favorably toward the use of federal funds for the purpose of maintenance. Neither Commissioner seemed to think that this was contrary to the intent of the Act, but felt it was necessary that this matter be submitted to the Comptroller General in order to obtain legal opinion. Dr. Wright indicated that this his immediate attention and as soon as an opinion is obtained, your Chairman will be notified and he in turn will inform the states of the action and recommendation to be taken by the U. S. Office of Education.

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